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Jonson to the complex principles of a Matthew Arnold, so that he may avail himself of the advantage of profiting by others' success, and of avoiding others' mistakes. Above all he must have the rare attainment of reticence and know when he reaches the limits of his almost endless task.

Biased by these prejudgments and many others, which we would not suffer to take even an airy shape, we opened Prof. Hunt's book and began to read. The first excellence we noticed was the wise restriction of the general plan. Two brief introductory chapters sketch the preliminary period from Bede to Bacon. Part First is devoted to Representative Historical Periods; Part Second, to Representative Literary Forms; and Part Third, to Representative Prose Writers and their Styles.

In a work of so broad a compass clearness in discussion will depend upon the principles of classification, and also upon the relative gradation from period to period. In his classification, the author makes a sufficient recognition of the classificatory work of previous authorities, and then suggests the following method:

- I.—Period of Formation, 1560—1660.
Bacon to Milton.
- II.—Period of Transition, 1660—1700.
Milton to Addison.
- III.—Period of Final Settlement, 1700—1760.
Addison to Johnson.
- IV.—Period of Expansion, 1760—1860.
Johnson to Carlyle.

Writers like Oliphant would object to this classification, and would seek for the formative influences upon English Prose in writers preceding the Elizabethan era; they would call that era the epoch of greatest expansion. Yet we think the plan, taken as a whole, justifies these principles of classification in the relation they sustain to other parts of the work.

In Part Second the author does not seek for a *summum genus* of literary forms, but bases his divisions on the logical principles of *process*, *quality*, and *object*.

In Part Third the learned author announces three distinct principles for the classification of prose authors, the Basis of Periods and the Basis of Literary forms already adopted, and

then adds a purely literary division on the Basis of Thought and Style.

Thus has the way been prepared for a methodical discussion of twelve representative English Authors, on a plan similar to those of Drake, Masson, Minto and Bain. The authors treated are Bacon, Hooker, Milton, Addison, Swift, Johnson, Burke, Lamb, Macaulay, De Quincey, Dickens and Carlyle. The conclusion, like the tufts of the pine-apple, indicates the tendency in the growth of contemporaneous literature.

We conceive the leading excellences of the work to be the comprehensive plan, which enables the author to have a firm hold upon the whole discussion; thoroughly assimilated material, so that nowhere is the reader repelled by the crudities of pedantry; an absence of all attempts to parade his learning, and a genuine sympathy with his subject. This attempt has therefore resulted in the production of a work which should speedily find its way into higher seminaries and colleges, wherever the need is felt of a comprehensive study of representative English prose authors.

T. WHITING BANCROFT.

Brown University.

The Commedia and Canzoniere of Dante Alighieri. A new translation by E. H. PLUMPTRE, D. D., Dean of Wells. Vol. I. London. Wm. Isbister.

A Study of Dante. by SUSAN E. BLOW. New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Son's

The first volume of Dean Plumptre's long-expected translation of Dante, which contains the Hell and the Purgatory, together with the life, must be upon the whole, I think, a disappointment. The Dean's well-earned reputation as a translator of Sophocles, his learning and intelligence, and the specimens of his work that had appeared in print, had caused a better translation to be looked for than has appeared. The chief difficulty, it may well be believed, is one that is insurmountable, viz: rhyme. He declares in his preface that he has aimed to give the nearest analogue to the *terza rima* that the nature of the English language permitted. But the resemblances be-

tween his verse and Dante's can be reduced to these three, that it is rhymed, that the rhymes follow the same order, and that it is a line of ten syllables, which is the number of syllables that count in a very few of Dante's lines, and to secure this, nearly everything else of importance had to be sacrificed or modified.

The translator of Dante must give up at the outset all thought of reproducing the dissyllabic rhymes of his original, yet the dissyllabic endings are an element of the metrical effect scarcely less important than the rhymes themselves. To mention only one thing; no reader of Dante can fail to notice the skillful use he makes of the occasional monosyllabic rhyme; it compels our attention to just the right thing, at just the right time. This is quite impossible with the uniform single rhyme of Dean Plumptre. Compare.

Chè, se Tambernich
Vi fosse su caduto, o Pietrapana,
Non avria pur dall' orlo fatto cricch,

with the Dean's

For should the Tambernach
Fall on it or Pietra Pana's (*sic!*) rock,
E'en on the edge it had not made a crack.

I have not observed a double rhyme in the translation, but even if it were always used in place of the Italian single rhyme, though it would furnish the variety sought after, it would no more be the equivalent of the original than would a triple rhyme, which Dante also uses a few times; the metrical effect would be quite different.

I doubt if blank verse uniformly of eleven syllables would be much better than Dean Plumptre's rhymed verse of ten; I know of no such English translation, but Philalethes' German translation, admirable as it is in most respects is to my ear monotonous and but little closer to the *terza rima* metrically than Dean Plumptre's.

The fact is that the essential structure of verse is so widely different in the Romance and the Teutonic languages that it is a well-nigh hopeless task to try to transfer from one to the other the same metrical effect, even where the difficulties are not so great as in the *Divina Commedia*. The *rondeau*, the *ballade*, the *villanelle* of Lang and Gosse and Dobson are fairly good representatives in English of

their models, but it is the rhymes, the refrains and the general tone which make them so, not the metrical effect of single lines, which is distinctly English, not French; it is the artificial side of these forms of poetry, not the artistic side, which makes them better suited to imitation in a foreign tongue.

Now there is nothing artificial in Dante's use of the *terza rima*, and I do not believe that any possible English imitation can preserve any considerable part of the value of the original. Robert Browning has shown a perfect mastery of the English form in "The Statue and Bust," but it is the English, not the Italian, music that strikes the ear. Streckfuss, a more skillful versifier than Plumptre and with an abundance of double rhymes at his command, is scarcely more successful in this respect. There is little to choose between.

When our life's course with me had half-way sped,
I found myself in gloomy forest dell,

and

Auf halbem Weg des Menschenlebens fand
Ich mich (*I mi ritrovai*) in einen finstern Wald verschlagen.

There is only one way, as I think, for a translator; it is to do as Longfellow has done, to take blank verse with free use of dissyllabic endings. The English form of the *terza rima* might do in the hands of Browning or Wm. Rossetti, hardly in Longfellow's, for some portions, such as the voyage of Ulysses, the story of Francesca, the meeting of Vergil and Sordello, the prophecy of Cacciaguida, though that is doubtful, but certainly no English verse can render so well as the blank verse of Longfellow the magnificent closing books of the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, such speculations as those on the spots of the moon, on the freedom of the will, on the nature of the stellar influences, or the examination of Dante by Peter, James and John, on Faith, Hope and Love. Blank verse has established itself as the proper poetical vehicle for such subjects, and bids fair to remain so, until a successor arises to Robert Browning, who shall add to the vigor and breadth and delicate, deep insight of the author of "Sordello" and "Saul" a little more care for poetical form.

No one would be more delighted than the writer of this notice to see a rhymed translation of Dante which would give a reader not

familiar with the original, something of its savor, but this is certainly not the case with the present translation. Even the purely technical structure of the verse is not up to the level which may fairly be demanded of a translator of Dante. What can excuse, except perhaps the necessity of rhyme, such a verse as

He wanders seeking freedom, *gift men bless* (l ch'è sì cara)

(*Purg.* i. 71), or what constraint of any sort can excuse in a translator of Dante, such rhymes as *rear, there, were*, (*Inf.* XXII, 11 sqq.), *come, doom, illumine, above, move, cove*, (*Purg.* VII. 23 sqq., 41 sqq.) or such a line as

"Let Poesy that was dead rise again" (*Purg.* I. 7).

which is simply a bad line, not due in the least to the necessity of rhyme or meter, as is also,

Make them such prayers in our temples learn,

(*Inf.* X. 87). Many are the verses which are padded out to the desired length. Nothing is more foreign to the directness and compactness of Dante than the use of two epithets where one is enough. But Dean Plumptre apparently does not feel this or the six lines that follow, all taken from the first fifty lines of *Purg.* I. would have taken another shape.

Which leaves so *dark* and *stern* (crudele) a sea behind,
Which gathered in the aspect *calm* and *bright*. (sereno).
Soon as I passed forth from the *dank, dead* (morta) air,
The planet whence love floweth, *sweet* and *fair* (che ad amar conforta).

The rays of those four stars, so *pure* and *true* (sante).
Which darkens aye that valley *dark* and *dread* (nera).

Not in one of these lines, except possibly in the last, is there a suggestion of a double epithet. It is only necessary to look at Longfellow's translation of them, to see how much more truly is reproduced the tone of the original, which includes much more than rhyme. How could the Dean, if he had felt the music of Dante, have let pass such a terzett as this.

Already was I gazing, *all* intent,
To look *all* down the pit that open lay,
All bathed in tears of anguish and lament, (*Inf.* XX. 4-6.

Tutto occurs just once, and why must *già* be turned by *already*, when many ways to avoid the repetition of the syllable *all* should have suggested themselves?

The faults which have been pointed out would not be so serious in so difficult a task, if they were not so numerous, and if the claims made for this translation did not inevitably

suggest comparison with Longfellow's, incomparably the most poetical, as it is the most literal of verse translations, unless W. M. Rossetti's *Inferno* be an exception. It would be interesting to compare Plumptre's with other rhymed versions, but none are accessible to me except Sibbald's *Inferno* and parts of Parsons' *Purgatorio*. Sibbald uses, like Plumptre, what passes for the English equivalent of the *terza rima*. The epithet is a less deadly foe to him, and the choice of words and the structure of the sentence is decidedly more Dantean, but there is a roughness in the verse which is widely at variance with Dante's un-failing art, and which makes it even less representative of the original metrically than Plumptre's verse.

Parsons' translation is in the meter of Gray's "Elegy," without division into stanzas. There is no attempt at a line for line translation, but it is surprising that he has been obliged to depart from it so seldom. Perhaps it would have been better if he had not kept so close to it, for a three-line division of a four-line stanza, which is often the impression given, is not agreeable, but with this exception, his translation is far superior to Plumptre's. Dr. Parsons has a poetical sense, which seems to be lacking in Plumptre. Compare his version of the six lines quoted with Plumptre's.

Turning from sea so terrible its prow,
Which overspread the beautiful serene,
Soon as I left that atmosphere of death.
The beautiful planet which gives love new breath,
The rays of those four sacred splendors there,
Which makes the infernal valley black for aye.

When we consider Plumptre's undoubted capacity and intelligence as an interpreter, and then compare his Sophocles with his Dante, it will be plain how the restraints of rhyme have hampered him, so as to spoil what might easily have been a creditable, even a good translation. As it is, there are passages which seem to me as good as the conditions he has imposed on himself will allow. The closing books of *Purgatory*, in particular, contain much that is in every way excellent.

It is pleasant also to be able to give almost unreserved praise to the matter contained in this handsome volume. He has, to be sure, not escaped the common error of all biogra-

phers who have to construct lives of great men out of scanty material; some of his conclusions are not only startling, as he says they may be, but even absurd, at least if stated as anything more than the merest guesses, but this is an amiable weakness, which can work no serious harm. His notes justify his claim, that he knows what the average reader wants; they are not so felicitous in literary illustration as Longfellow's, but in other respects they are much more useful to the average reader for whom they are meant, and are sometimes suggestive. His theory concerning the Matilda of the Purgatory is, I think, new, and certainly attractive, though, as he fully acknowledges, it rests on a slender basis of facts. He seems inclined to take the more horrible view of the famous line (*Inf.* XXXIII. 75.); but the most natural, as I think, as well as the most agreeable interpretation of the words, supports the other view. But on this, as on many other points on which he comments, no agreement is ever likely to be reached, and it would be very unfair to blame him, because others think differently.

Finally, I can not help remarking his indiscretion in publishing some preliminary sonnets, a thing which will surely suggest a damaging comparison with Longfellow's, certainly among the finest sonnets which the last twenty-five years have produced.

Miss Blow's "Study of Dante" is the work of one who has studied the Comedy faithfully, intelligently, we may almost say sympathetically, and seeks to interpret its ethical and spiritual teaching to an unbelieving world. The little book contains much that is valuable and will repay reading. The symmetrical formal structure of Dante's great poem lends itself more readily than poems like Faust to such a formal scheme of his teaching as Miss Blow has given. No doubt, too, some such general scheme is in accordance with Dante's own purpose, and calls for no serious criticism.

It is unfortunate that Miss Blow is not more careful to distinguish between what Dante says and what she interprets his utterances to mean. This is, however, a minor defect, attaching only to the form of literary expres-

sion, and is not likely to mislead any serious student.

A greater fault is her apparent inability to appreciate the enormous difference between St. Thomas Aquinas and Hegel. The prevailing tone of the book is as far as possible from that of Dante's master, so that even where the thought is just, it is often clothed in phraseology which would have been obscure, if not unintelligible, to the poet himself. Dante certainly did not have ever present to his thought "self-identification with the divine" though it is no doubt true that he never forgot that

"...il ben, ch'è del volere obbietto,
Tutto s'accoglie in lei e fuor di quella
È difettivo ciò ch'è li perfetto,"

Whatever the truth was that inspired his "rapt utterance," "O Luce Eterna" etc., it certainly was not that "the eternal distinction of the self is the begetting of an eternal object, the eternal identification of this object with self is eternal recognition, communion and love." It is doubtful whether in any sphere, under any circumstance, Dante held that "each man is now himself plus all other men." Of course, it is possible that Miss Blow has used such language deliberately, but if she supposes that the usefulness of her book for the general public is increased thereby, she is widely mistaken. That she is able to express simply whatever she wishes to say, is shown by numerous instances in this very book, and it is a pity that she has not chosen to do so always.

If another exception can be taken to the book, it is to what she seems to imply rather than to what she distinctly says. One might infer from some expressions, both in the book and in Mr. Harris' introduction, that Dante's hell was symbolical and nothing more. But it is not a matter for doubt that he believed in the literal physical suffering of guilty souls after death, if souls can be said to suffer physically. Nor need this interfere with the symbolical interpretation, for he expressly adopts in the *Convito*, I. 1, the fourfold interpretation of Scripture, literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical, and there is no reason why we should not suppose that he intended to place in his accounts of the sufferings and glories of

the future life, not only the literal, but also the allegorical and moral, perhaps even the analogical sense. But it must not be forgotten that Dante himself requires that the literal sense should come first as that which contains the others. If he had not believed that lost souls suffered literal pain, he would have chosen some other way to convey his teaching. It looks very much as if Miss Blow had fallen a victim to the very tendency she deplores, that of imagining that everything, even all punishment, is symbolical or excusable or "a course of practical logic" by which man learns wisdom. Physical suffering after death seems so "alien to our feeling," that Dante would apparently lose in her estimation by believing it. The abstract ethical side of Dante's teaching rightly predominates in her teaching, but the full significance of even this can not be grasped by him who does not know or forgets that he accepts the universal belief of his time as to the material side.

However, in spite of this, Miss Blow's book is a welcome addition to the few accessible books on this subject, is sure to be useful to the average reader who is not repelled at the outset, and will have value also for the professed student. If she sometimes finds more than Dante put in, it is in most cases only an addition, not a falsification, and her warm ethical feeling and keen ethical insight can not fail to exercise their legitimate influence on any sympathetic reader of the *Divine Comedy*.

E. L. WALTER.

University of Michigan.

La Question du Latin. Par RAOUL FRARY. Deuxième Edition. Paris. Librairie LÉopold Cerf. pp. 321.

This title might lead us to suppose that the work is a discussion of the language question. It is in fact much more. The author has carefully discussed a renovated curriculum for the secondary schools of France. To quote his own words: "Ce que je propose ou ce que je rêve c'est un enseignement plus conforme aux besoins de notre temps." He writes with the progressive and independent spirit that characterizes the excellent works of Spencer and Bain on the same subject.

The need of a renovated curriculum is found in the conditions characteristic of the present time—conditions that are widely different from those existing when the old curriculum was established. When the chief literary treasures of Europe were contained in Latin and Greek, and Latin was the language of the learned world, it was proper that the ancient languages should form the basis of education. At that time these languages served not only the ends of culture, but also the ends of practical life. Human progress has altered these conditions of two centuries ago. The field of knowledge has been vastly extended; new literatures of great worth have been produced; the mother tongue has supplanted Latin as the language of scholars; education, no longer confined to the so-called learned professions, is regarded as a needful preparation for every important vocation in life; in each country the business interests that require intelligent men have greatly multiplied; and international relations, which encourage commercial, social, and literary intercourse, are becoming more intimate every year. In the presence of these conditions, the old curriculum is obviously inadequate.

The war of 1870-71 led to an earnest discussion in France of educational reforms. Their humiliating defeat cruelly disturbed the complacency with which the French people were wont to think (I translate from M. Bréal) that the civilized world had its eyes fixed upon them in order to copy after and admire them. The truth began to be recognized, as Bismarck had said, that Germany owed its success in part to the German school-master. A spirit of patriotism inspired among the French a desire to improve their schools of every grade. As a result, no other nation has made better progress in educational work during the past fifteen years. It is in connection with this general reformatory movement that the question of liberalizing the curricula of the lyceums and colleges has been earnestly discussed. Important modifications, giving greater prominence to the mother tongue, modern languages, and natural sciences, have been made; but the reformatory movement, as is the case in this country, has not yet expended its force.